

REMARKS

The Office Action of December 6, 2004, has been received and considered. Applicants appreciate the opportunity for their counsel to meet with Examiners Sharp and Saether. The claims have been amended in a manner consistent with the interview. In particular, claims 1-5, 8 and 10 have been amended, and claim 6 canceled. Reconsideration of the application as amended is requested.

In regard to the examiner's objections, Applicants note that "the latter" has been deleted in view of the new recitation in claim 1 that the sealing washer completely surround the flange. Claim 6 has been canceled. Claim 8 has been amended to recite a region of the flange that is covered by the sealing washer and faces to component. Applicants believe these changes remedy the noted objections.

A number of other changes have been made to the claims simply as an effort to more clearly state the inventive structure. These amendments are not made to overcome an objection or rejection or to define the invention over the prior art.

Claim 1 has been rejected under 35 USC 103 as being obvious in view of (i) US Patent Nos. 6,443,678 to Mizuno and 5,301,396 to Benoit, and (ii) the Mizuno patent and US Patent No. 5,173,026 to Cordola. As discussed during the interview, Applicants submit that claim 1 is not obvious in view of these references.

Mizuno discloses a grommet provided with body (2) and a flange (3). However, Mizuno fails to disclose a sealing washer, much less a separate sealing washer that completely surrounds the flange with a shoulder along the outer edge of the flange and a collar extending in the through hole. Indeed, Mizuno is specifically

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designed to avoid the use of a separate sealing washer (see col. 1, lines 23-41). Accordingly, it would not have been obvious to add a separate sealing washer to Mizuno when in fact Mizuno has provided a grommet specifically to avoid such an addition.

Benoit and Cordola disclose fasteners, but neither discloses a nut to receive a screw. Moreover, neither Benoit nor Cordola provides anything to suggest that it would have been obvious to provide Mizuno with a sealing washer. Benoit discloses nothing more than the use of a conventional, annular sealing washer. Cordola discloses the use of a sealing member secured to four blades 12a-d. Even if there was some suggestion to use such washers in the Mizuno grommet, there is still no teaching of providing a sealing washer that completely surrounds the washer with a shoulder on an outer edge of the flange and a collar in the through hole.

Hence, claim 1 is believed to be allowable over the cited prior art. Dependent claims 2-11 are also allowable for the same reasons.

In addition, claim 2 recites that the shoulder is beveled on an inner side such that its thickness decreases in the direction away from the component. Similarly, claim 3 recites that the flange is beveled in accordance with the bevel of the shoulder. Claim 4 recites that the shoulder merges into a sealing lip oriented toward the nut piece. Claim 5 recites that the sealing washer includes a ring that projects into the aperture. Claim 7 recites that the collar projects beyond the flange with an extension. Claim 8 recites that the flange is provided with projections. None of the three references relied upon to reject the main claim include any of these features. Accordingly, these claims

are also believed allowable for these additional clauses.

Therefore, for all of the above-discussed reasons, Applicants submit that claims 1-5 and 7-11 are allowable. A notice to this effect is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 7, 2005

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